

*Warner
from
Mr. Smith*

29 November 1966

NOTES On Conversation with Russ Blandford of the House Armed Services Committee Staff

1. The relevant facts lying behind this conversation seem to have been the following:

a. In February 1966 Mr. McNamara briefed the House Armed Services Committee on the Soviet ABM.

b. On November 10, 1966, Mr. McNamara said in a press conference that he believed there was considerable evidence the Soviets were deploying an ABM system.

2. Mr. Blandford seemed to think that in his testimony of February the Secretary had cast a good deal of doubt on whether the Soviets were indeed deploying such a system. The main question that he wanted to ask was whether there had been any evidence between February and November which would have caused the Secretary to "change his mind" and make the more definite and public pronouncement which he made.

3. Stoertz and I stated that there was no specific piece of evidence coming during this period which would have caused anybody's opinion to shift from great doubt to confident certainty. We did point out that the evidence on the Moscow systems had been cumulative. We mentioned as an example the Livermore Laboratory's study of x-ray effects. We said that of course we could not guarantee that some particular item had not particularly influenced the Secretary, but we knew of none that clearly would have done so. We do not know of course what DIA may have told him at some point; we did point out the difference of opinion between DIA and ourselves on the Tallinn system.

4. With reference to Mr. McNamara's February testimony, Mr. Blandford read to us from it. At his first reading we thought -- and said -- that the testimony was entirely in line with the current estimate, i.e., an estimate the Soviets were deploying an ABM system around Moscow. Later in the conversation Mr. Blandford read again from the testimony and this time what he read seemed to convey an impression by Mr. McNamara that the estimate was extremely "provisional". The upshot is that we are in some doubt as to exactly what Mr. McNamara did say in February.